

# **video art**

**Michael Rush**

**with 383 illustrations, 296 in color**

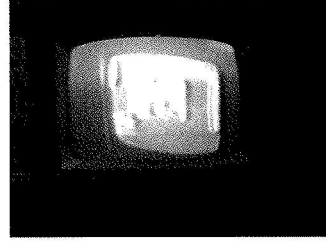
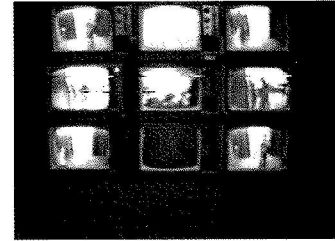
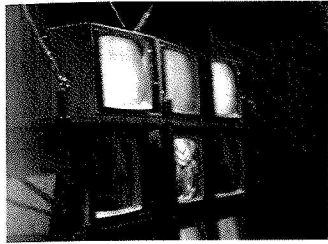


**Thames & Hudson**

## Frank Gillette

LEFT

16–20 *Rituals For a Still Life* (1974–75) is a work for collage and video. Expressive of Frank Gillette's roots as an abstract painter, this video features an assemblage of collages arranged in front of a video monitor that is showing Gillette's videotapes. Moving and still images merge into a landscape that is both aesthetically appealing and technologically innovative.



## Frank Gillette

ABOVE

21–24 Frank Gillette has always been interested in taking technological systems and 'turning them toward artistic uses.' In *Wipe Cycle* (1969) he wanted to make a break with television by subverting the usual single viewing screen with the use of multifocal, multiple screens. He also experiments with the time-based qualities of video projection that allow for feedback and time delay. Commercial television is only now catching up with this work in so-called 'Reality TV', in which participants are taped live in a variety of everyday situations.

viewable on a monitor. The term 'up close and personal' soon caught on to describe the intimate feel of the taped interview or news report. Today, with video cameras on every street corner, at every bank machine, and on the tie clips of tabloid TV news investigators, everyone is 'up close' and our casual comings and goings are suddenly 'personal' to the nameless security experts who scour these tapes watching for 'false moves.'

Gillette and Schneider made one of the first installations of Video art, *Wipe Cycle* (1969) – an exceptionally influential work that anticipated the video installations of the 1980s – for the Howard Wise Gallery in New York. The exhibition 'TV As a Creative Medium' was the first show in the United States devoted to Video art.<sup>8</sup> *Wipe Cycle* featured nine video monitors, four of which showed pre-taped material (some taken from television shows) and five of which played live and delayed images

of viewers as they entered the gallery. 'Viewers were mystified,' Gillette says. 'They were seeing themselves on television mixed in with all these other images from TV shows and they were shocked as well as delighted.' Recalling Andy Warhol's visit to the gallery, he says, 'Andy, of course, loved seeing himself on television, but even he was a little confused by the multiple images and time delays. He kept shifting his briefcase from hand to hand to see if he was really being filmed live or not.'

The American curator Ben Portis described the impact of the exhibition in this way: 'Although "TV As a Creative Medium" is renowned as the seminal video art exhibition in the United States, its subject was truly television, and, by "TV" was meant television at its most pervasive. As with other revolutionary exhibitions... "TV As a Creative Medium" was both the grand finale of an idea – the kinetic art movement of the 1960s – and an unresolved indication of the future – the impact of video and television in the hands of artists. It was transitional as well as formative.'<sup>9</sup>

In keeping with the spirit of the times, in which countercultural activities were often accompanied by manifestos, pamphlets, books, and other publications, Raindance published a periodical, *Radical Software*. From 1970 to 1974 *Radical Software* was the theoretical voice of the video movement, reaching an audience of 5,000 readers. In their second issue, editors Phyllis Gershuny and Beryl Korot wrote:

In issue one of *Radical Software* (Summer, 1970) we introduced the hypothesis that people must assert control over the information tools and processes that shape their lives in order to free themselves from the mass manipulation perpetrated by commercial media in this country and state controlled television abroad. By accessing low-cost half-inch portable videotape equipment to produce or create or partake in the information gathering process, we suggested that people would contribute greatly to restructuring their own information environments: YOU ARE